

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 6, 8, and 10-12 as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A nozzle for plasma torches, said nozzle comprising

a body integrally formed of (a) a metal or a metal alloy and said metal or said metal alloy being mixed with (b) wear-resistant microparticles of a hard material different from the metal or the metal alloy, said microparticles being uniformly distributed within ~~the~~a total volume of the metal or the metal alloy, said body including an arc forming region, said microparticles filling a volume proportion in the range between 0.5 and 15% in the body.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein a maximum grain size of said embedded microparticles is less than or equal to 30 μm .

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein a maximum grain size of said embedded microparticles is less than or equal to 15 μm .

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said hard material is a carbide.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said hard material is silicon carbide.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said hard material for the microparticles is at least one of an oxide, a carbide, a nitride and a boride.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said microparticles are in a grain size spectrum around an average grain size d_{50} , which is located in the range between 1 and 5 μm .

Claim 8 (Canceled)

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said microparticles are embedded in a region pointing toward an inside of the body.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said microparticles are located in a region of an opening of the body.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said microparticles are located in a locally differentiated manner.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said metal or metal alloy is essentially copper or a copper alloy.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): A method for manufacturing a nozzle for plasma cutting torches as claimed in claim 1, wherein the nozzle is manufactured by extrusion from a metal or metal alloy powder mixture containing said microparticles.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 13, wherein a final contour of the nozzle is formed by at least one of a chip-removal machining process and a metal-forming process.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, wherein said hard material is a ceramic material.